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ABSTRACT

A program designed to provide instruction in fundamental English, mathematics, science, and reading skills to 200 students entering college under a federally supported open enrollment plan is described. The program began as a 6-weeks summer program aimed at diagnosing needs of students and offering them assistance with reading and study skills related to the courses they would take in the fall. During the fall and spring semesters courses were offered in general reading, writing, and reading in social science, science, humanities. In the spring semester students in regular programs were also admitted to the open enrollment classes. First year evaluation indicated some gains in reading and writing skills and determined (1) that strict control of attendance was a factor in success, (2) that further study was necessary to continue first year gains, and (3) that counseling of students was advantageous. Several possibilities for additions to the program were listed. (MS)

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A READING PROGRAM FOR OPEN ENROLLMENT

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Open Enrollment description: Open Enrollment people were to be a federally supported (Education Opportunity Funds) group of two hundred freshmen - "selected" from five hundred students through interviews, no exams or minimums on college boards or minimum grade point. After selection in late spring, those accepted for the open enrollment program were to be enrolled for an orientation program for six weeks during the summer preceding fall entrance. They earned no credit but were exposed to fundamentals in English, Science, Mathematics and study skills.

During the six weeks summer orientation program, the major function of the Reading and English areas was to diagnose reading and writing problems of the open enrollment students and feed those with deficiencies in this area into the reading and study skill programs. As a result of determining these needs, it was decided that eight sections of reading and study skills were needed, each with an enrollment of eight to ten students and meeting three days

a week with one s.h. credit given for each section taken. A description of the different courses offered is as follows:

General Reading Skills - one s.h. credit (3 days per week)
This course emphasizes the necessary basic reading skills needed for successful college reading and thinking. Students will be given intensive work in critical reading and comprehension. This will include separating fact from bias, detecting author's mood, drawing inferences and conclusions and analysing opinion. Vocabulary expansion will be covered in various ways - use of context clues, prefix-suffix identification. The proper use of various college textbooks and manuals will also be stressed. Students will be shown text aids such as charts, graphs, footnotes, bibliographies and glossaries. Organizational skill such as notetaking, summarizing and outlining will be reviewed. Location and reference skills will include use of reference books, reader's guide and use of the index.

Reading in Social Science -
Students will be shown essential social science reading skills such as detailed map reading, longitude-latitude skills and location finding. Chart and graph reading will also be emphasized along with other common textbook reference aids for the reader.

Reading in Science -
Students will be instructed in the importance of reading and organizing detailed factual information common in most scientific course work. Special emphasis will also be placed on difficult but significant scientific terminology. Instruction will be given in the proper use of a science textbook.

Reading in the Humanities -
Comprehension skills will be stressed in this course - helping the reader retain substantial amounts of reading material. Different types of reading matter - short story, essay, novel, fiction and non-fiction - will be compared for different reading needs and skills.

Writing Lab -
All the basic skills in writing - grammar, usage, punctuation, etc. will be reviewed. Students will be instructed in proper and critical format for various types of papers. Outlining of a theme will be presented along with editing of a final copy.

Students needing help were placed (mandatory) in at least one reading or writing class and, in many cases, both.

We had immediate feed-back on the mandatory nature of these courses. The students, once they were accepted into college, felt that "they were here and

should be able to choose whether they wished to sign up for these courses or not!" This brought into focus the immediate need for counseling activities as a part of the reading, writing programs. Two of our staff with appropriate training agreed to initiate such activities to examine the potential of this component of the courses.

Counseling activities were rather time consuming, and after six weeks this component was phased out of the course content except in unusual cases or short term discussions of specific problems.

Near the end of the course (1st semester) feed-back was solicited from the students regarding how course could be changed to become more effective. In almost every class the statement was made that they wanted more rate activities and especially more use of machines. 80% of the people elected to take an additional reading and study course. There was also a complaint of too much time spent on testing and not enough on helping them. Apparently the concept of diagnosis for enlightenment was not needed nor desirable by them at this time. One reoccuring problem was tardiness and absenteeism. This pattern was not restricted to the reading-study classes or writing labs as the identical attendance patterns were also obvious in all classes the open enrollment people were enrolled in. It became obvious that rather strict enforcement of attendance did work and it was also obvious that the attendance was directly related to improvement in skills. This pattern was especially obvious in the Writing Lab courses.

The second semester brought several changes in the program as a result of trial and error and talking with students and teachers and final test results. The changes made to the basic course were as follows:

1. Classes to be opened to all students, not just open enrollment people.

2. More emphasis on vocal development was necessary.
3. More machine work and rate exercises for motivation purposes to be included.
4. Stricter attendance and tardiness regulations at the beginning of the semester.
5. Less formal testing but more variety of informal reading tasks presented as a part of the instructional process rather than a pre testing and post testing operation.
6. More continuity between teaching reading skills in the content areas and the content courses being taken in the sciences, maths, English communication and social sciences.
7. More continuity between the reading and writing sections be attempted.
8. Encouragement of other people than just open admissions people to enroll in all sections of reading-study and writing classes.

Evaluation of first year:

While most people from open admissions program achieved Nelson-Denny or California Reading test scores of approximately 9th grade, it was apparent that usable reading level was usually closer to 7.5, but this usable reading level was most amenable to increase when taught to, while with standardized test scores it was rather difficult to produce significant changes on the post testing. Generally low comprehension scores tended to produce little increase in rate even when pupil motivation was strong, whereas those with higher levels of comprehension (on standardized test) seemed to make more increase in rate and some gains in comprehension.

In the Writing Lab courses, the most common errors were the following:

a. Ommission of endings or wrong endings on verbs or nouns or lack of agreement.

b. Spelling errors

c. Punctuation errors

d. Redundancy of ideas.

e. Some errors in usage

Good progress in correcting the above was directly related to good attendance and the number of sessions of attendance during semester.

Strict control of attendance and tardiness was necessary and tended to be fruitful for student and instructor.

Counseling techniques, while useful, were deemed too time consuming to be used with any regularity but must be used when the students seek it out.

Adequate gain was maintained by one and two semester students but deficit was still present in most students who took full year of reading, thus a third and fourth semester is probably best taken.

Students generally liked program, but were attracted more to multi-media and machinery and motivationally these devices were of value.

Regular systematic vocabulary instruction (Bergen-Evans) both in general vocabulary and in vocabulary from specific content areas were effective in increasing standardized test scores and in increasing students ability to use tests.

Students opinions on questionnaire were generally positive (85%) and 80% of pupils indicated they would take another course in Reading-Study Skills and/or Writing Lab.

There is definitely a need for credit to be given, perhaps even more than the present one s.h. for three hourly sessions per week - (perhaps two s.h.).

These classes should definitely remain small, at least ten and under, and should be open to all students who desire to enroll.

The Reading-Study Skill courses or Writing Lab courses should not be mandatory, but should be available during all time slots of the day for easy accessibility.

Some future explorations now under consideration:

1. Giving of two s.h. credit for each Reading Study Skill section taken, up to six s.h. total.
2. Combining of English-Communications, a three s.h. three period per week course, with one s.h. Writing Lab course, meeting two days per week with the same instructor teaching both.
3. Combining of some English-Communication courses with a Reading-Study Skill course.
4. Developing similar patterns with Biology courses and History courses as instructors will allow.
5. Although a full year of reading and/or writing courses definitely produced improvements (average of one year) in the open admissions people, it would still be desirable to plan a full second year of Reading and Writing courses for them to continue, and it is my feeling they should receive some elective credit for their efforts.

This past year has indeed been a fascinating one, but the full challenge is yet to come.

Just how many will be able to go the full route, to the graduation day in June that will unlock the door of their future? Many I hope!